

**FARCE ON ICE
AS ARSENAL
CATCH COLD**



MADNESS!

Luton force a new replay

By ALEX MONTGOMERY: Arsenal 0, Luton 0(aet)

THIS wasn't football — it was 120 minutes of FA Cup madness in North London.

There is no way this fifth-round replay should have gone ahead on a Highbury pitch that was both unplayable and potentially dangerous.

But, in the end, it was a night when Luton had far more to celebrate than their illustrious opponents. And they had the real heroes in skipper Steve Foster and goalkeeper Les Sealey.

Between them they blocked out the mounting threat from Arsenal, and particularly Charlie Nicholas, as the game slithered into extra-time.

To add to Luton's delight, they won the toss afterwards and the second replay will be played at Kenilworth Road tomorrow night.

I doubt, though, that Arsenal will be too upset at playing away because, after this, it will be a pleasure for them to play on a plastic surface.

Lottery

No wonder Luton boss David Pleat said: "That was a wonderful advert for synthetic pitches."

It was obvious before the game started that it was going to be a lottery.

At least one third of the surface was covered in ice or snow and the rest was bone hard.

It is ludicrous to think that two teams should play for high stakes like an FA Cup quarter-final against either Spurs or Everton on such a surface.

To be fair to the teams, they gave us a game far better than the conditions should have allowed.

When the action came it was exciting stuff and, as the match moved into

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CHARLIE NICHOLAS...
always a threat



BEAT YOU, MATE! Luton hero Les Sealey nicks the ball away from Paul Mariner to foil Arsenal again.

Picture: PETER JAY

Arsenal

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extra-time, Arsenal turned on the pressure in front of the Luton goal.

It was then that Foster and Sealey came into their own — the former England centre-half for his command and confidence and Sealey for a couple of crucial saves.

Arsenal will claim they should have had three penalties, but referee Allan Gunn wasn't in the mood to award one to the annoyance of a superb 26,547 crowd who deserve all sorts of honours for turning up on such a bitterly cold night.

At least we were spared the bad blood between these teams spilling into raw violence, though some tackles were far too brutal.

Rough

One by Arsenal's Steve Williams looked certain to earn the former Saint a booking, but the referee let him off with a warning.

Foster could, therefore, feel he was handed rough justice when his tackle on Williams in the second period of extra-time got him booked.

Arsenal were without Tony Woodecock, Stewart Robson and Paul Davis.